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E. William Heiser. Sixty Years  
with East Bend. History and  
Photographic Record of East Bend  
Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

(1949)

AMERICAN HISTORICAL SURVEY

~~III-10~~  
III

## *Sixty Years With East Bend*



*History and Photographic Record of  
East Bend Mennonite Church*

*Fisher, Illinois*

III

THE STATE OF NEW YORK

VERLE OYER  
FOOSLAND, ILLINOIS





## INTRODUCTION

We bring you this history and pictorial record as a commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the first services held at East Bend.

Let us look back with pleasant memories on the old and arise to meet the challenge of the wonderful opportunities of the new. We dedicate this edition to those who through the years and especially the past year have made East Bend what it is today. Let us press forward to seize the opportunities it affords. May we say with the Apostle Paul—"this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

CHESTER ZEHR,  
Editor of the Trumpet.






*Part One*  
*History of East Bend Mennonite Church*  
*from 1889 to 1949*

Written by  
E. WILLIAM HEISER  
Fisher, Illinois

PREFACE

This history of the East Bend Mennonite Church could not have been written except for the grateful aid of the following people: Bishop and Mrs. J. A. Heiser, Rev. and Mrs. Harold Zehr, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Heiser, Miss Alma Heiser, Miss Elaine Sommers, Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Oyer, Mrs. Merle Heiser and Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Heiser, and any other people who I may have absent-mindedly forgotten.



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## CHAPTER I

Before beginning the history of the East Bend Church, I will present a brief history of the settlement of Mennonites in Illinois.

In the spring of 1833 Benjamin Kindig, a member of the original Lancaster County Kindig Family, left his home in Augusta County, Virginia, along with his son David and the rest of the family, to seek opportunities in the cheaper lands of Illinois. They settled in Tazewell County near what is now Union Cemetery on October 22. Their only possessions consisted of one four-horse wagon, one three-horse wagon, and a one-horse carryall. They camped in tents or wagons and sometimes on the bare ground itself. They had traveled 800 miles and had been on the road seven weeks.

Kindig was soon followed by residents from the same locale in Virginia. These people who came after him were not of the same faith, but many were converted to the Mennonite belief. It is believed that these people were of Mennonite descent but one cannot be sure.

The first minister and bishop of this new church was Jost Bally, who came to Illinois around the year of 1837 from Pennsylvania. These new settlers soon began to hold worship services in homes and the church was probably organized in the early forties. The immigration continued at a rapid rate until the Civil War, when it was slowed considerably. These farmers suffered the same hardships as the rest of the farmers in the United States, and a number of the young men were drafted, however, it is uncertain whether any actually went to camp.

During the first period of immigration, six churches were formed in Illinois. Only one of the original churches is now extinct, two are called Old Mennonites, and the last joined the Central Conference of Mennonites, which has now merged with the General Conference. Another joined the General Conference, and one was called Amish. Unlike the Amish, the Mennonites did not form new churches aside from the settlements that were originally formed. Some families settled irregularly over the state and soon lost their identity as Mennonites.

Although dangers prevalent on the frontier had passed, the Mennonites had many hardships to face. Some of the state's holdings were sold for \$2.64 an acre, therefore, most of the settlers purchased their own farms. However, bringing it under cultivation was an exceedingly hard and boring job. These early settlers occupied log cabins, but after a few years they built frame houses. Much of the furniture was home-made. The only available light was home-made tallow candles, and cloth was purchased and made into clothing for men and women. The men, when dressed for Sunday, wore clean "overall" trousers with coat to match and leather boots, and the women wore large bonnets, capes, and long dresses. In some cases the prayer covering was worn constantly, since this garment was thought to be a religious necessity brought from their former homes. Mennonite young people, regardless of whether baptized or not, dressed similarly to their elders.

There were many handicaps to making a living in this day and age. Farming was very crude and machinery had not yet made its appearance. All cultivating was done by hand; corn was the main





crop. Prairie fires were prevalent. They sometimes broke out completely destroying houses, property, and sometimes the family itself.

Markets were scattered, there were no railroads, and the closest mill was in Chicago, 120 miles away. Grain was hauled in wagons, and hogs and cattle were driven on the road. This journey required approximately two weeks. The Amish and Mennonites introduced the first wagons, which were made completely of wood.

Diseases were prevalent due to the many sloughs and marshy prairies and the mortality rate was high.

After settlers had their bare living from the soil, there was little time left for social or religious activities and the religious organizations were unstable. There were no meeting houses and no cemeteries. The deceased were placed in crude coffins made by neighbors and buried on their own farms. Church services consisted of a Sunday meditation once or twice a month in some home or barn. German or "Pennsylvania Dutch" was the only spoken language. Although the settlers were conscientious and honest, religious affairs were secondary in their lives and served mostly as a social affair. Aside from the bishop, there were no connections between the congregations.

There was no association between the Amish and the Mennonites due to geographic separation; however, in Tazewell County, where both were settled, no cooperation was formed between the groups. They were to each other separate denominations, and inter-marriage was forbidden. Unstable as church life was during this period, precedents and church habits were formed, some of which were of lasting benefit and others which did considerable harm.

The generation of today could not appreciate the advantages we have if it were not for the sacrifices made by these pioneers. It has been only a century since the Mennonites entered the state, yet the prairies have been broken and made into beautiful garden spots, and stretches of open prairie have become happy Christian communities with well organized churches and religious activities.

## CHAPTER II

The East Bend Mennonite Church was developed by people who had immigrated from Tazewell County into Champaign County. It was named East Bend because it was located on the East Bend of the Sangamon River near Fisher.

The first Amish settler in Champaign County was Charles Stormer who came from Dillon Creek in 1882. The land was cheap, and Stormer purchased a farm, paying twenty-seven and one-half dollars per acre. He was followed in the next year by August Ingold and in 1887 by Jacob Heiser from Morton. In the years of 1888 and 1889 Andrew Birky and Peter Zehr came to Fisher. Peter Zehr was the first minister and soon organized a church in the Dixon School house in East Bend Township.

Due to the increase in number of the congregation, a committee of trustees was suggested and Jacob Heiser, Charles Stormer and Andrew Birky were appointed to serve. On March 18, 1896, a one-



acre cemetery was donated by Andrew Birky, Sr. This was registered with the state and is still in use today.

The first singing in the church was in the German language. Songs were usually sung slowly in unison without benefit of notes or chorister. About 1896 notes and part singing were introduced, but the German language was still in use. About 1910 it became necessary to use the English language since the children no longer studied German. The church was formally opposed to the use of musical instruments, however, the majority of people now have them in their homes. As yet no musical instrument is used in the church service since the conference and congregation both think that a more worshipful service can be rendered by acapella singing. The early attitude toward high schools was one of opposition, as they felt it made the young people conceited, but the attitude gradually changed until now the church is in great favor of high school training.

The church first became interested in mission work in 1905 through visitors of various mission stations. Andrew Birky was chiefly responsible for this missionary interest.

The Mennonites of East Bend were and still are very fundamental in the basic doctrines of the Bible. The attitudes of these early members were similar to those of all Mennonites, but as time went on they were revised along with the doctrine of the conference.

The first Sunday School was held in the spring of 1889, and during 1892 the Sunday School was organized permanently with D. D. Zehr as superintendent. Services were held every two weeks in the forenoon, and all class work was held in German with no lesson helps of any kind. It was conducted in this way until 1895 when a new church building was built at its present location. The membership was greatly increased, but the Sunday School sessions were still held every two weeks until new methods and supplies were added. Since that time Sunday School has been held every Sunday. Until 1946 the officers of the Sunday School were elected by the members of the church at the end of each year.

Young people's meetings or evening meetings were organized in 1906 but were not well attended until 1914. At this time a group of young people met in the home of Bishop Zehr for the purpose of asking the church to arrange a better organization. The suggestion was given that a superintendent and an assistant be appointed. The plan was adopted by the church, and the reorganization was soon effected. J. A. Heiser was appointed the first superintendent of the Young People's Meeting, with Levi Birky as assistant superintendent. The organization continued to expand and today it is a very active division in the church. These meetings are held every Sunday night with the exception of the last Sunday night of each month when an evangelistic sermon is given by one of the home ministers or by a guest speaker who may be invited in.

There have been mid-week meetings through the years, including prayer meetings and Bible courses. At present a course on personal evangelism is being taken by a large group of the young people. A great deal of interest has been taken by the young people, and instead of their taking upon themselves the whole responsibility of their social gatherings as they formerly did, they now have an organization, by means of which their social needs are met, that is under the supervision and authority of the church. A literary so-





ciety was formed, but the ministry discouraged joining the state organization.

The Sewing Circle was organized in 1917 by Lydia Smith of Flanagan, Illinois, through the Woman's District Missionary Society for the purpose of exercising charity toward those in need. Meetings were held monthly for a number of years in the members' homes, but now they are held in the basement of the church. The organization works through the state board, and it, too, is a prospering organization. They sew for the needy in Puerto Rico, India, Africa, and the rest of the mission fields. During the war they did extensive canning and sewing for M. C. C. and Relief. Every year the women, with help from their husbands, put up canned foods for the missions in Chicago. They acquire their finances from offerings of the congregation alone, with the exception of donations that are given them by numerous people.

The Christian Worker's Band was started in 1938, by a committee of young people with the help of the ministers. The purpose of the organization was to work with the ministry of the church in promoting spiritual welfare and the Christian activities for the young people of the church. At first a constitution was formed, but later the band was reorganized, and the constitution was discarded. It became part of the church with any member of the church being eligible to hold office. The organization consists of executive, extension, library, advertising and industrial committees. The duties of the executive committee are to look after the overall activities of the band. The extension committee sponsors and surveys for Sunday School and mission outposts. The library and advertising committee takes care of tract distribution, roadside signs, publishing the church paper and numerous other activities. The industrial committee takes care of the needs of the members and non-members of the community and helps sponsor relief canning and other relief activities of the church.

On the Fourth of July, it is the practice of the church to hold an all day meeting. These meetings were started by Bishop Peter Zehr in 1914. There is a session until noon and a basket lunch is then served. At 2:00 p. m. the afternoon session begins, and in the evening the final session is held. The speaker is always a guest speaker from another church. Occasionally a series of meetings precedes the Fourth of July meeting. On Thanksgiving and Christmas, morning meetings are conducted. Communion is held twice a year, once on Easter and once in either October or November. Baptismal services are usually held twice or three times a year or whenever the need arises.

In 1946 the need arose for reorganization of the business of the church. The officers were formally elected the first of the year, and the finances were handled by the trustees, but under the new system officers take office the first Sunday in October, and a treasurer, who is responsible for the distribution of finances, is elected by the church. The first treasurer was Russell Massanari who formerly served at Camp Dennison in C. P. S. Business meetings are held not regularly, but whenever the need arises.

The church also has a mixed chorus which was started in 1923 by Alma Heiser. The first cantata was given at Easter. This met with some opposition by the lay members, but they continued in spite





of the opposition. Alma Heiser was director for one year when she resigned, and Walter Zehr was made director of the chorus.

As mentioned previously, Peter Zehr was the first minister and bishop of East Bend. He was born in Woodford County, Illinois, in 1851, and moved to Tazewell County at the age of five. He was ordained to the ministry in the Goodfield congregation in 1883 at the age of thirty-two. He moved from Goodfield to East Bend in the spring of 1889, and in 1893 was ordained to the office of bishop and served the congregation faithfully until a few weeks before his death in 1922.

Joseph Beacher was born in France on March 31, 1833. He immigrated to the United States when he was fifteen years old. He settled in Eureka, Illinois, where he lived until 1890, when he moved to Fisher. He was ordained by the voice of the church on April 30, 1893. He served the congregation until his death on June 30, 1931.

Samuel S. Zehr was ordained to the office of deacon in 1906. He was the only deacon to the congregation and he served in this position until his death in 1942.

Other co-laborers were Daniel Grieser and Bishop George Gingerich.

The present ministry is composed of Bishop J. A. Heiser and Harold Zehr.

Joseph A. Heiser was born in Tazewell County near Morton, Illinois, on August 22, 1888. He was baptized June 11, 1905, by Peter Zehr at Fisher, Illinois, and was ordained as minister on August 5, 1917, by voice of the church at Fisher. By voice of the same church he was ordained bishop on May 1, 1921. He is active in Bible Conference and evangelistic work in many of the states and Canada, and at the present time he is moderator of Illinois Conference and a member of General Mission Board.

On December 15, 1909 he married Fannie Schrock. To this union were born three girls and two boys.

Harold A. Zehr was born on October 15, 1903. On June 30, 1926 he married Alma Unzicker, and to this union were born four boys and four girls. He was ordained to the ministry on June 21, 1931, by the voice of the church at Fisher. He has been active in the work of the church, being colporteur of the Mission Board, Assistant Moderator of the Illinois Conference, editor of the Missionary Guide, Illinois member of the Publication Board, and from 1931 to 1947 secretary of the Church Education Cabinet and Sunday School Committee of Illinois.

The church has grown rapidly since its founding. It has outgrown two church buildings. At the present time a new building is being constructed. The church has now over 500 members in full fellowship some of whom are doing mission work at different outposts and the remainder are in attendance at the home congregation.

## CHAPTER III

The East Bend congregation has a very extensive mission program under the supervision of the extension committee of the Chris-



tian Worker's Band. Arthur was formerly an outpost, but since 1940, it was organized into a congregation.

The work was started by J. A. Heiser, who had visited the community in 1926. The community was composed of Amish. He investigated conditions of the Amish church and the young people, but everything seemed satisfactory, so the matter was dismissed temporarily. In the summer of 1929 Mose Troyer and family began attending the East Bend congregation. He spoke of being dissatisfied with the Amish Church. It wasn't long before other families and young people began attending these services. In 1935 another group came to Fisher to inquire about bringing their church letters to Fisher. They also inquired about the possibilities of supplying services at Arthur for them. There was at this time much opposition from the Amish leaders.

In 1936 Obie Bontrager moved to Arthur from Indiana, and he began to attend services at East Bend. This opened the way, and in October, 1936, the first services were held in the Bontrager home. The services were held on Sunday afternoon by members of the East Bend congregation. The first series of meetings were held in December, 1936 by Bishop J. A. Heiser. There were about eight converts.

In the spring of 1938 they began to have services in an abandoned country church. In the fall of 1938 H. J. King and family from Harper, Kansas, moved to Arthur and took charge of the work. In the fall of 1939 a church was bought from the Pentecostal people. The church is located in the town of Arthur. The church has now over two hundred members and has been enlarged several times. They are now in the process of erecting a new building.

In 1940 the extension committee of the Christian Worker's Band began an extension Sunday School at Dewey, Illinois. In and around Dewey there were many who were in need of the gospel.

The first Sunday School was held in April 1940, in an upstairs lodge hall which was not being used any more. The first few months the Sunday School was held on Sunday afternoon. Later the time was changed to Sunday morning, and they had preaching services every other Sunday conducted by the ministers of East Bend. The Sunday School superintendent was in charge of the services the Sunday the ministers were not present. The Sunday School was held in the upstairs hall for four years with an average attendance of twenty-five. In January, 1944, it was moved into a small Lutheran Church building that had been closed because of lack of interest. This was a much more suitable building and was a great help to the work. The Sunday School has been held in this place ever since with an average attendance of forty-five.

During the eight years in which the Sunday School has been conducted, four evangelistic campaigns have been carried on. The first was held in 1941 with A. H. Lehman as evangelist. In 1946 C. F. Derstine, and in 1947 and 1948, E. M. Yost were the evangelistic speakers.

Most of the work has been done with the children and shut-ins of Dewey. One of the problems has been the shifting population of Dewey. Although the work has not been growing rapidly, it has been a means of getting the gospel out to the unsaved. Nine members have been baptized that were not of Mennonite ancestry.

Another outpost started by members of the East Bend congrega-





tion is at Lake City, Illinois. This work was started in September of 1945 by the Roy Cender family. They worked this field single handed for two years. In December of 1947 the church felt that some support should be given to this work. As a result Raymond Sommer, Robert Springer, and Roy Cender were named as a committee to investigate the situation there. The results showed that the people were unanimously in favor of continuing the work. The services had been carried on in a Methodist church that had been abandoned. This was greatly in need of repairs and the East Bend congregation took it upon themselves to repair the building. The congregation contacted Reverend Harold Oyer in December of 1947 and he assumed the responsibility of carrying on the work with the help of East Bend as well as some of the members of the Arthur congregation.

One family of East Bend was also instrumental in opening the Oak Grove Church south of Fisher, which had been closed for approximately five years. This church had been under the supervision of the United Brethren Conference. The congregation could not support a minister. Since the building was standing useless, the United Brethren Conference decided to tear it down. This aroused the interest of the community as there were many families that had previously attended services there and were not attending elsewhere now. Brother Harvey Stacey was burdened about his community and began to pray and contact the members. In a short time the church doors were opened and services are being held every Sunday. The average attendance is about forty and is gradually on the increase.

Another part of the extension work is with the colored people in Gibson City. This work was started as a result of contacts by the Raymond Sommer family with a colored lady at a public meeting. During the conversation she mentioned the spiritual condition of her race in town. They soon felt the need of her race socially and spiritually. Other churches in the city gave the colored people no welcome.

The group was small, only about one dozen colored homes in the city. The little church which they claimed as their very own place of worship was a neglected little building, doors locked and in a very run down condition. Near the church lived an old colored pastor who no longer carried on because the group was too small to support him. He lived in the church property under false pretense with his conference.

The colored lady was very sociable which made it easy for them to look further into conditions and find out if the church could be of any help to them in our extension work. They asked her if she would accompany them at some other date to all the colored homes of the city to find out the attitude of the group.

Different groups and also our ministers called on these homes on the average of one Sunday a month. This eventually became too large a project for one Sunday afternoon. After the ministers felt that they had the confidence of the people won over, the people then saw that they were interested in nothing but their spiritual welfare, they consulted the old pastor. They asked him about repairing the church and calling together the little flock for worship in their own building. Physically the old colored pastor was unable to be responsible for this charge. So our ministers felt like this was their own opportunity to minister to these colored folks, and the colored pastor consented for them to go ahead with this project.

The little church was then repaired, painted and cleaned with the





help of the industrial committee of our church. On March 24, 1946, they had the first meeting in the church with a good attendance of not only colored people but also from white people. Reverend Harold Zehr had charge of a short rededication service and Reverend J. A. Heiser preached a sermon. Sunday School and church is held every Sunday in charge of workers from the East Bend congregation. The attendance averages around thirty-five. The services are held at 2:30 in the afternoon making it possible for one of the ministers to be present. A group of colored ladies bring a special message in song every Sunday.

Recently a children's Bible class was organized and it meets every Friday evening for teaching and singing. The church also has an active sewing circle that meets once a month.

The East Bend congregation also helps support the work of the General Mission Board. The G. D. Troyers were the first ones to enter into the Puerto Rican field of labor and at the present time the East Bend congregation has nine members in the field of service in Puerto Rico. The congregation also has one family in the Indian field. A collection is taken once a month for general mission work and then is sent to the General Board.

Small groups in the congregation give full support to other missionaries earnestly engaged in mission work but not under the mission board. I will only mention Brother Harvey Birkys who have been doing child evangelism in Alabama for several years. They are at the present time contacting 5,000 children weekly in the schools of Alabama. He is a graduate of Goshen College and also attended Moody Bible Institute for a short time.

For the last five years several families have been going to Sarasota, Florida, in the winter to hold Bible School among the colored children and have been doing a very commendable work.

## CHAPTER IV

As had been mentioned in Chapter II the first church building was the Dixon School House. This was used from 1890 to 1892 when it became unfit for use as a church building. Also the increase in membership made it necessary for a new church building. The committee rented the Methodist Church at Houstonville in 1892, but this also soon became unfit for use. The church members then voted to purchase one and one-half acres for a consideration of fifty dollars on which they erected a frame building 36 by 40 which contained one large room and two smaller rooms and held approximately one hundred and eighty people. It was dedicated by John Smith in 1895.

In 1907 the church building was demolished by a tornado. It was then replaced by another frame building which was 40 by 60 and had a seating capacity of 300. In 1919 the need again arose for enlarging. A committee was chosen and they enlarged the building and dug a basement which provided a place for a furnace and Sunday School rooms. This arrangement lasted until 1935 when the congregation again outgrew the seating space and remodeling had to be planned once more. This time the trustees took on the task of planning the remodeling. They removed the cloak rooms to the basement and made room for sixty-five people. This lasted until 1947 when it was a necessity to do



something about space. After much prayer and deliberation by the congregation, a committee was formed with Nelson Sommer as chairman. They secured an architect and began planning for expansion. They decided that they should use part of the old building with a large extension to the east. The committee then proceeded to raise the money for the building. There had been a building fund in the church for several years but in the last few years it had not grown very much. The new building is a brick structure with a vaulted auditorium and a balcony. This has a seating capacity of 750. The new building is equipped with a dozen classrooms, kitchen, and dining room facilities, a nursery, study, cloak rooms and rest rooms. The building has a 60 by 120 foot basement and is equipped with two furnaces. Much of the labor and part of the materials were donated and the building was estimated at \$110,000.

## CHAPTER V

As has been mentioned before in chapter II a literary society was formed. It's job was to provide a wholesome social life for the young people. The first meeting was held in 1917 at the home of Peter Good. The young people presented their plan for a literary to the ministry of the church and it was accepted. A cabinet then chose the various committees who were in charge of recreation, refreshments, programs and various other details. They decided that meetings should be held every three weeks in the homes of the members of the congregation. The programs consist of readings, musical numbers, or other special events. After the program refreshments and recreation were enjoyed by all.

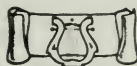
The cabinet is reelected every six months and the president cannot hold two consecutive terms in office. The young people voted to continue the literary as a separate organization when the youth fellowship was introduced. The literary at East Bend is a living and active organization with approximately 60 members.

The Youth Fellowship was brought up before the Literary in June of 1947. It had been discussed by the ministry, Band committee, and executives of the Literary. In January of 1948, it was finally organized and in June of 1948, it joined the national organization. The first sponsor was Willard Heiser. The purpose of the Youth Fellowship was to promote the spiritual sides of life parallel to the social side as developed by the Literary. The organization is composed of a chairman, girl member, boy member, sponsor and assistant sponsor. This forms the executive committee. There are several committees under this who have charge of prayer meetings and singspirations. The Youth Fellowship does shut-in visitation work in Paxton at an Old Peoples' Home. The program consists of music and a short talk by one of the members. They also provide music for the colored work at Gibson City and distributed toys for an orphanage. The fellowship has organized a chorus composed of the youth of the church. Meetings are held every three weeks, and they consist of singing, readings, panel discussions, or other appropriate numbers. The eligibility of the Youth Fellowship is limited to the young unmarried people of the Literary ages. The offices are limited to the members of the East Bend Church, but any Christian can be a member of the organization. The officers are elected every six months and the sponsor is elected by the voice of the organization every year.



## CONCLUSION

With the conclusion of this history we do not accept the success of our church boastfully, for we know that only through the help and divine guidance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ can we succeed. We hope for continued success and with mercy and guidance, we hope to continue to expound the Word of God and only do we do this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.



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en College, Goshen, Indiana.





## *Part Two*

### *Photographic Record*

We wish to thank the following who have furnished photographs from which this collection was taken:

E. W. Heiser.

Mrs. Vernon Hieser.

Walter Oyer.

Richard Oyer.

Verle Oyer.

Elmer Schrock.

Albert Zehr.

Chester Zehr.

Wilmer Zehr.



## LOG OF EVENTS

July 5, 1943—Building Fund started. This was preceded about two weeks by a business meeting at which time the trustees and ministers presented the facts of building needs. They felt that although it might be some time until we build, a fund should be started. Miss Bertha Miller made the initial contribution.

July 31, 1945—Business meeting held at which building needs were discussed.

Dec. 10, 1945—Business meeting held at which results of recent canvass of congregation revealed that most of money could be raised to meet the then estimated cost of re-modeling. It was decided that trustees were to call another meeting when they thought building might be undertaken.

April, 1946—Though building seemed impossible it was decided to add a balcony to present structure. This was later abandoned because of material shortage and priority difficulties.

Fall of 1946—Meeting held to decide whether to plan building or repair heating system. Many suggestions were offered, but nothing definite arrived at.

November 7, 1946—Constitution adopted outlining duties of all lay organizations, and changing fiscal year to October 1st.

November 21, 1947—Meeting called at which Rev. C. H. Deardorff, architect, presented his suggestions for re-modeling.

November 30, 1947—Questionnaire circulated which showed group favored using old building and re-modeling according to Deardorff's suggestion. Decided to form planning committee.

March 11, 1948—Planning committee meets with Deardorff.

March 15, 1948—Trustees contact Rev. Oran Shoemaker and find him available as a contractor.

March 30, 1948—Trustees meet with church council stating they find a contractor available, and make suggestions concerning formation of building committee.

April 4—Questionnaire which shows congregation has given final approval to building program, naming Deardorff as architect, and adding the names of Albert Heiser, and Dan P. Zehr to trustee committee forming the building committee. (Nelson Sommer, Daniel Teuscher, and Emery Hieser being trustees).

April 5—Building committee holds first meeting.

April 14—Deardorff meets with congregation to present final plans and show first draftings for blue-prints.

May 4—Ground broken for building.

May 12 and 13—Basement dug.

May 18—Foundation forms started.

Old auditorium used while first work being done.

June 25—First bricks delivered—brick-laying starts next day.

June 25—First services held in basement. New part of basement not used until after new roof completed—middle of October.

June 27—First services held in tent, which was used for four weeks.

September 7—Steel roof trusses being placed.

October 23—Heating system installation started.

November 1—Electrical wiring started.

November 10—Window glass installation started.

December 1—Plastering started—completed January 24, 1949.

February 7, 1949—Terrazza floor covering started—completed Mar. 7.

March 31—Sidewalks completed.

April 7—Landscaping done along building.

April 15—Carpenters complete their work.

April 24—Dedication.





Bishop and  
Mrs. J. A.  
Heiser

We gratefully acknowledge the service of our Bishop and Fellow Minister who have so untiringly furnished the leadership, counsel, and encouragement so vital to the congregation. May we ever reflect their efforts as we strive together in His service.



Rev. and Mrs.  
Harold Zehr







Building Committee—  
left to right:  
Daniel Teuscher, Daniel  
P. Zehr, Emery  
Hieser, Albert Heiser,  
and Nelson Sommer.

Rev. Oran Shoemaker,  
Champaign, Illinois,  
Building Contractor.







Scenes of yesterday. The East Bend congregation has long enjoyed the fellowship which follows a Sunday morning service.







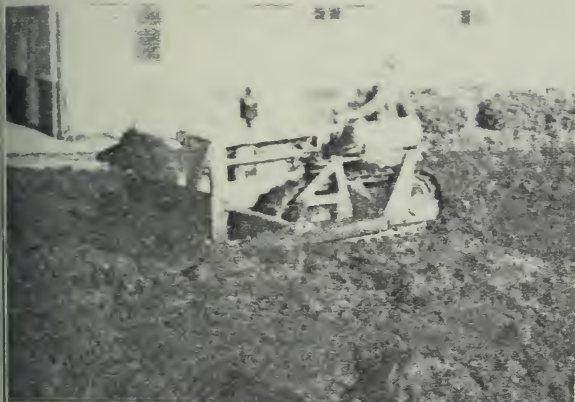


The old structure from the front and rear.



The ground-breaking service was held during a light rain on the morning of May 4, 1948. Rev. Heiser has taken the first shovel of earth.

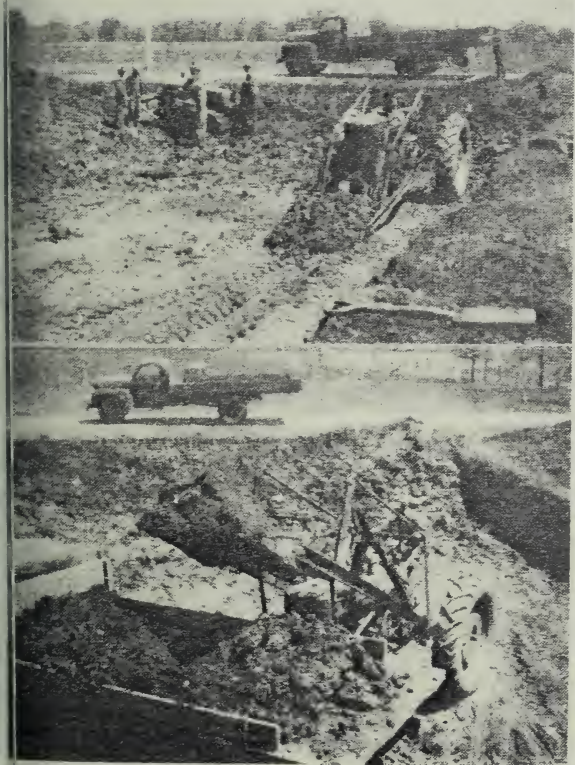




Mahlon Cender is seen at the controls of the bulldozer. May 12, 1948.



Above, the old chimney comes down. The bees were busy too!



Left, The basement is dug by local help. Tractor loaders and dump trucks are used to good advantage.







Lower left, taken May 18 shows 'Gene' helping figure forms for foundation. Upper left, the forms are coming off, while upper right reveals the completed auditorium foundation. Lower right, taken June 29, is a mixer scene during the pouring of part of the basement floor.



The first bricks are layed at the southeast corner, June 25. The tent in which services were held is seen in the background







The front of the old is being transformed into the entrance of the new. Amateur photographers were a common sight.

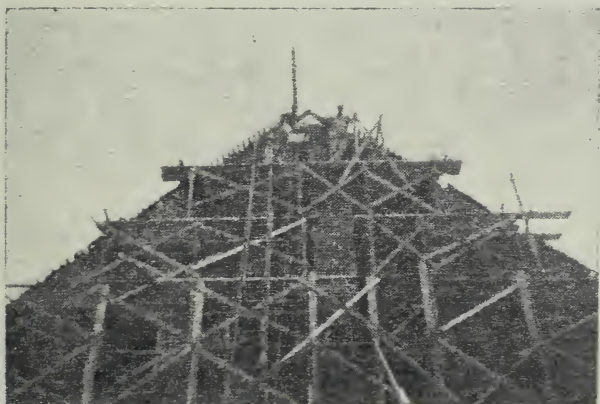


Eugene Stirewalt, the foreman, right, points out a blue-print detail to Nelson Sommer, building committee member, January 12, 1949, in church basement.





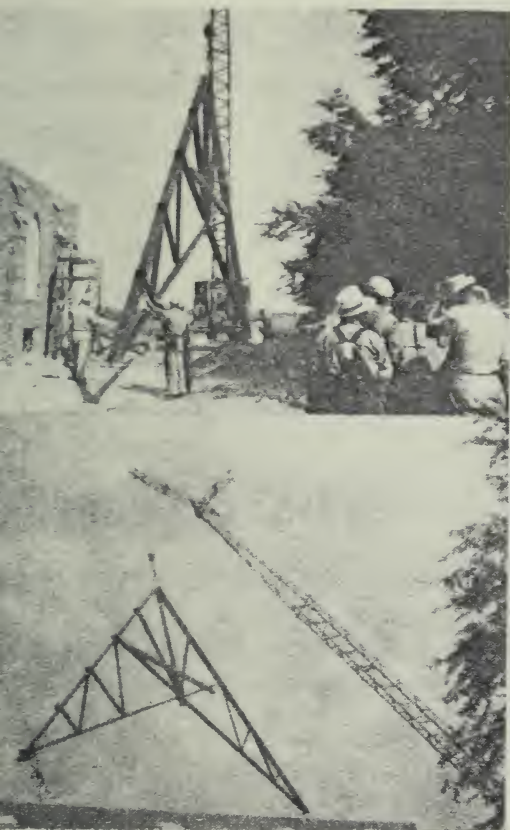
By August 26 we were able to begin to visualize the lines and size of the structure. The old blends into the new.



Scaffolding at the north gable reveals an interesting pattern. Taken in early August it shows some of the problems of masonry at that height.







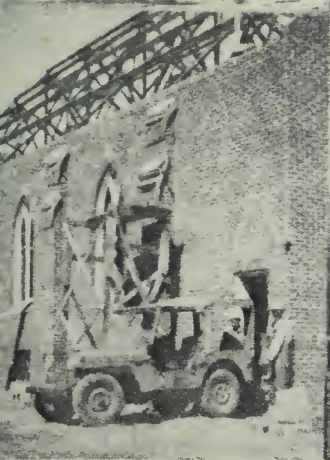
In the above photo a workman attaches braces and disconnects the derrick cables.



Left, on September 7, the first steel truss leaves the ground, swings in mid-air, and is finally lowered into place.





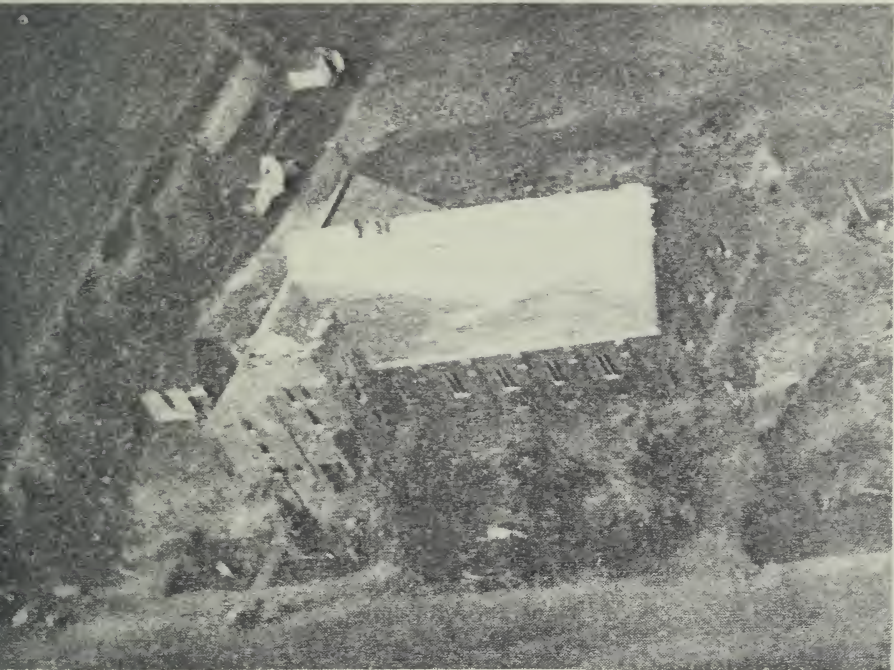


The general outline becomes more clear as the roof takes shape. The versatile farm jeep proves its convenience many times.



By early August the new entrance becomes quite prominent, the arch window frames go into place.





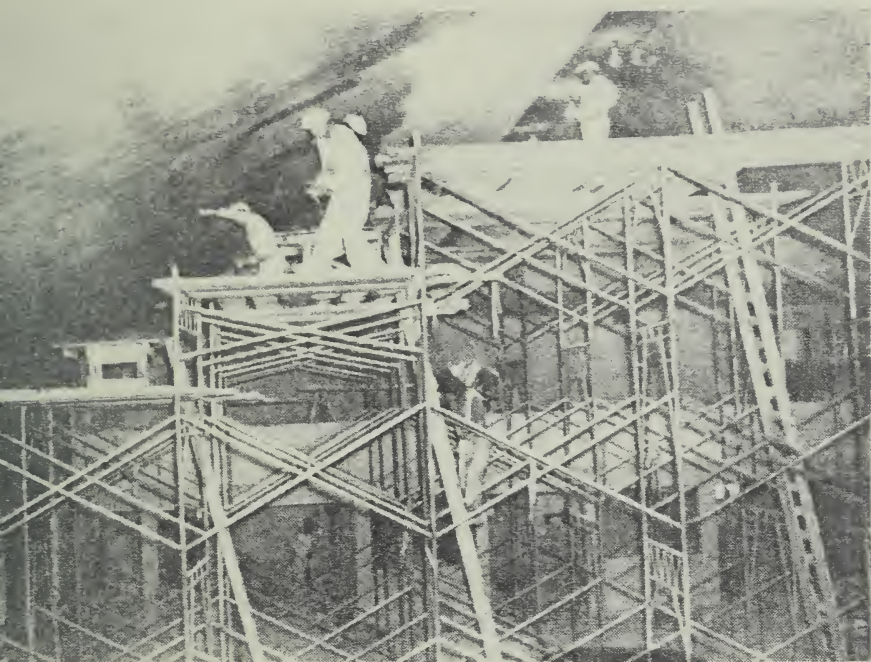
The above taken from a plane shows the over-all view. It was taken just as roof sheeting was completed on the afternoon of September 27. Three workmen can be seen on the roof.



Here is one of the first chances to visualize from the main entrance will take. This was taken several weeks before the picture above.







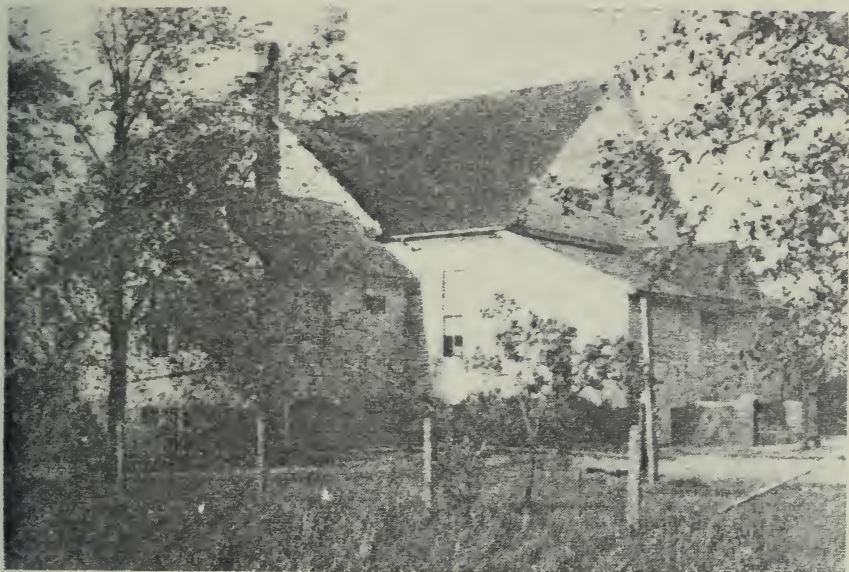
The final coat of plaster must go on in a day, requiring a large crew for the auditorium ceiling. Taken January 12, 1949, this photo denotes the size of crew and scaffolding used.



'Gene', the foreman, stops work one afternoon long enough to pose with his boss, 'Shoey', as Mr. Shoemaker is called.

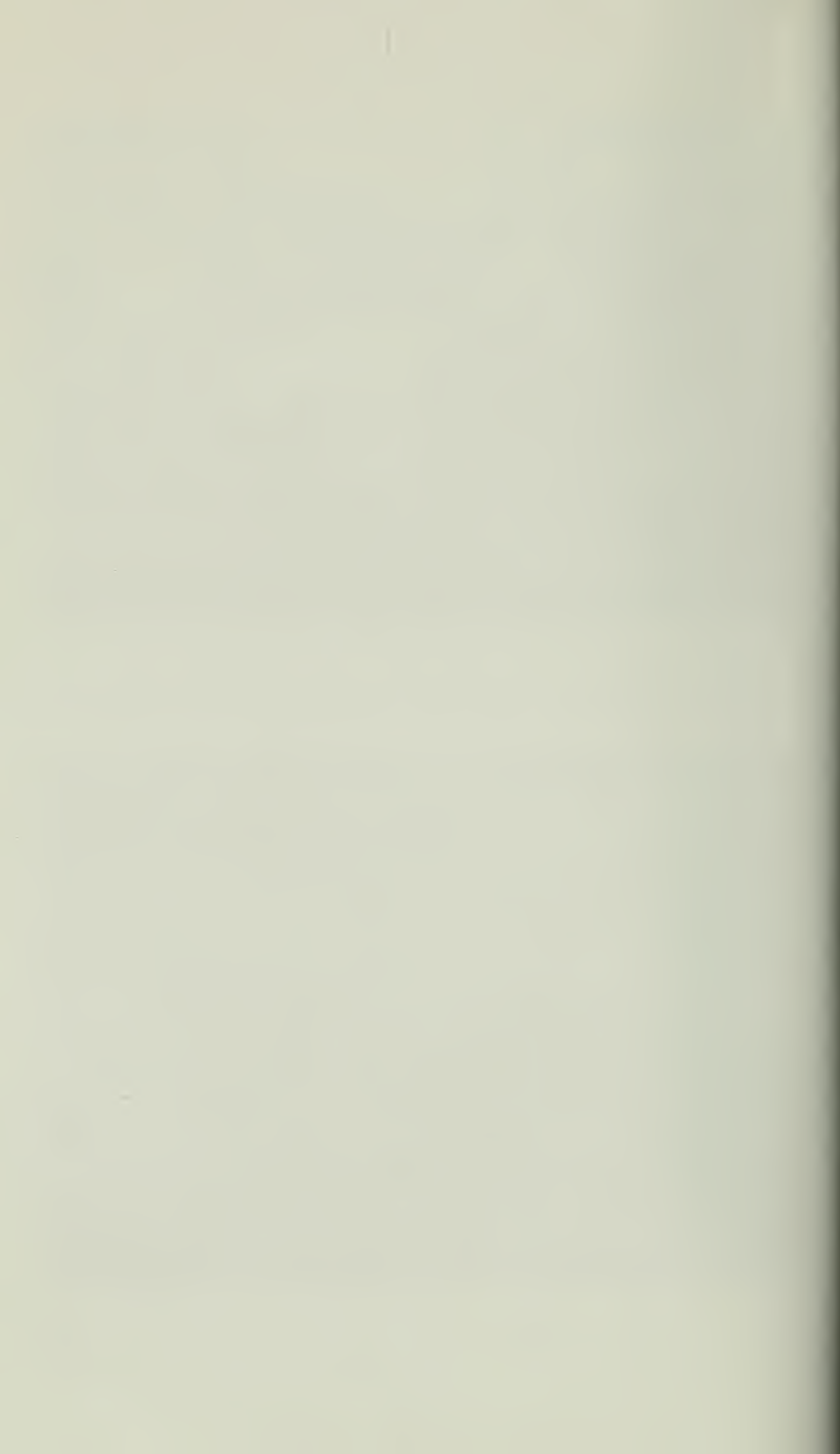






The former and the present homes of the East Bend congregation. These two photographs were taken about seven months apart.







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